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July 17, 2003

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The Honorable Thomas J. Ridge
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge:

I write to express my concern at the circumstances surrounding of the deportation of Rabih Sami Haddad and his family from the United States. During the evening of Monday, July 14, Mr. Haddad was deported to Lebanon. Neither his family, nor his attorney, were given prior notice of his departure. During a change in planes in Amsterdam, Mr. Haddad was able to call his family in Michigan and inform them that he had left the United States and was being escorted to Lebanon. While they were able to contact family in Lebanon to inform them of his arrival, their opportunity to make arrangements for his return was in no way protected by your procedures. Further, we have been advised that he was turned over by U.S. officials to Lebanese authorities upon arrival and placed in detention.

The circumstances of Mr. Haddad's deportation follows a disturbing trend toward secrecy in what should be open procedures which, at a bare minimum, allow relatives to track the status and location of family members. On numerous occasions, the family has required Congressional intervention simply to determine the location of Mr. Haddad's detention.

The circumstances of the Haddad family are exacerbated by the fact that their legal status in the United States is tied to that of Mr. Haddad. Up to the date of his removal, the Haddad family had apparently been in negotiations with your staff regarding their status and the potential for having the entire family, which includes one U.S. citizen by birth, travel together to Lebanon. This morning, I was advised that deportation orders have been issued for Mrs. Haddad's removal to Kuwait and for the removal of three minor children to Lebanon. These order result in the inhumane split of the family between three different countries, with the mother who has acted as a single-parent for the last 18 months separated from all the children. At this time, it is not clear whether they will be deported immediately or will be permitted to negotiate the terms of their departure.

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With respect to national security, the deportation of Mr. Haddad raises even more troubling questions. In denying his petitions for relief, the Immigration Judge reportedly found that a "plethora" of public information linked Mr. Haddad to terrorist activity, noting that the Global Relief Foundation, of which he once served as president, had been designated as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. However, Mr. Haddad was never criminally prosecuted for terrorist activity or even made a subject of the Special May 2001 Grand Jury in the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division that heard information concerning the activities of the Global Relief Foundation. If your immigration officials are correct, your staff released a person with credible ties to terrorism. If they are wrong, Mr. Haddad was a victim of guilt by association and unlawfully ejected from a community where he has played a constructive role a spiritual leader. In either case, the circumstances of his deportation raise questions that must be scrutinized at the highest levels:

1) As the Immigration Judge found "a plethora of public information link[ing] Haddad to terrorist activity," please detail the clearance procedures designed to ensure that individuals who are a threat to national security are not deported before being subject to criminal prosecution and the specific determination in this case (emphasis added).

2) As mentioned above, Mr. Haddad has been moved repeatedly without notice of his location to the family. Please detail the family notification requirements in the execution of deportation orders.

3) As Mr. Haddad was an applicant for political asylum, his advocates have expressed concern regarding his status with the Lebanese government. Please detail the notice procedures to foreign governments in deportation cases and the agency of the Lebanese government which accepted and detained Mr. Haddad upon his return to Lebanon.

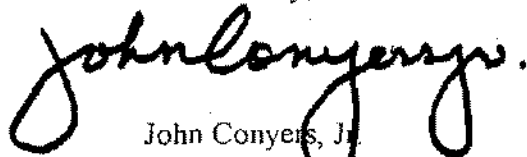
4) As stated above, the Haddad family was in the process securing a negotiated departure from the United States pending the exhaustion of Mr. Haddad's appeal from removal: a) Please detail the legal status of the Haddad family; b) Please detail the procedures for deportation of a family generally and c) Please detail the procedures for deportation of a family when minor children are of different nationalities from the parents, including U.S. citizenship.

Given the pending deportation and separation of family members, thank you in advance for your immediate consideration of this matter. Please contact me or my Judiciary Committee

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Counsel Keenan Keller at (202) 225-6906 with any questions and to schedule a meeting so that we may discuss this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Conyers, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

cc: Hon. F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman, Judiciary Committee

Ms. Pamela Turner
Director, Homeland Security
Legislative Affairs